

Questions to Ask When Choosing a Doctoral Program

Because some students may not know what things to ask when weighing their doctoral program options, the following list of questions is provided as a guide. Following each question are answers that apply specifically to the University of Missouri Statewide Cooperative EdD Program in Educational Leadership. Potential students are encouraged to use this list of questions when making inquiries about doctoral programs they may be considering.

1. What is the return I can expect on my investment of time and money?

When Cohort 9 students completed coursework in the Spring of 2015 they were asked several questions regarding the influence of the program thus far. 45% of those who responded to the survey reported having received a promotion since entering the EdD program and 60% reported having received a pay increase since entering.

2. What is the reputation of the institution and the program from which I will receive my degree?

The University of Missouri is a doctoral university: highest research activity ([2015 Carnegie Classifications](#)) and has a national reputation for program excellence. The Statewide Cooperative EdD Program has been lauded by various national and international organizations for its innovative delivery, cohesive curriculum, and rigorous standards. For example, the program received the University Professional and Continuing Education Association's (UPCEA) [Outstanding Program Award: Credit in 2015](#). Founded in 1915, UPCEA is the leading association for professional, continuing, and online education.

Additionally, the University of Missouri is one of 62 members of the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU). The AAU was founded in 1900 to advance the international status of U.S. research universities and membership is by invitation only. MU is one of 34 public institutions among the membership and the only public university in Missouri on the membership roll.

The University of Missouri Statewide Cooperative EdD Program is one of the 21 Phase I institutions in the [Carnegie Foundation Project on the Education Doctorate \(CPED\)](#), joining in 2007. CPED brings together many highly-respected institutions that offer the educational doctorate to discuss national and international issues related to the degree program. Another benefit of being a CPED member is the opportunity to learn about best practices from EdD programs around the world.

3. What are the goals of the program and what competencies do graduates gain?

The mission of the EdD Program is to enhance the knowledge and competencies of educational leaders who provide optimal conditions for the education of all learners. Our vision is to create scholarly practitioners who transform educational policies, programs, and practices through ethical and compassionate leadership.

The emphasis of the EdD Program is on developing effective, thoughtful, and reflective practitioners who are competent in identifying and solving complex problems of practice in educational settings. As a program dedicated to the development of these scholarly practitioners, graduates will:

- ✓ Know foundational and current theories and perspectives in leadership theory and practice, organizational analysis, educational policy, and content and context of learning.
- ✓ Know the importance of being responsive to issues of social justice including power, privilege, and difference.
- ✓ Know how to identify and analyze problems of practice.
- ✓ Know the value of reflective practice.
- ✓ Know theories and research behind teams and group dynamics.

In addition to developing knowledge that is informed by theory and empirical research, content themes are integrated with practice emphasizing real-time application in the work setting so that graduates will:

- ✓ Be able to provide effective leadership to their respective organizations.
- ✓ Be able to work collaboratively to achieve organizational goals with a diverse set of stakeholders.
- ✓ Be able to address problems of practice through the use of data, both pre-existing and by utilizing data collection methods of their own.
- ✓ Be able to engage in reflective practice in order to implement change in their professional practice and within their organizations.
- ✓ Be able to respond to issues of social justice within their organizations and communities.

4. What is the likelihood I will complete this degree after I am admitted?

Our overall program completion rate is over 88%, with the vast majority of students completing the degree in 4 to 5 years.

5. What is the admissions process like?

The Statewide Cooperative EdD Program utilizes a holistic, selective admissions process. Acceptance into the program is not automatic but is based on a two-tiered screening process. This process maintains the quality of the students in the program and,

consequently, contributes to the quality of the program. The first tier of application screening is based on a holistic review of applications. After this first round of reviews, a pool of candidates are invited to participate in the Interview Day, which consists of in-person interviews as well as an activity designed to gather additional feedback on a candidate's abilities to problem solve and write. Recommendations for admissions are then made to the Coordinating Committee who has final approval. On average, 57.1% of applicants are admitted.

New students are admitted as "cohorts" into the program every 2 years. At a minimum, an applicant must hold a Master's degree and have relevant organizational leadership experience to be considered for admission. Additional information regarding the application process can be found online at <http://edd.missouri.edu/apply>

6. What do graduates "do" with their degrees after they graduate?

Statewide Cooperative EdD graduates hold and transition into top leadership positions in PK-20+ educational settings. Position titles have included Assistant Superintendent, Superintended, Vice President, Registrar, Director of Admissions, just to name a few. Graduates of the EdD Program hold positions all around the state of Missouri, nationally, and internationally.

7. What is unique about this doctoral program as compared to its competitors?

We believe there are several features that distinguish the EdD Program from other doctoral programs. These include but are not limited to the following:

- A PK-20 cohort model which allows students to gain a broader understanding of educational systems across the lifespan.
- Collaboration across the state, amongst faculty and students. This occurs through course assignments, curriculum planning, advising, development of programmatic policy, and so on.
- The Statewide Cooperative EdD Program has a multi-layered administrative structure which enhances the aforementioned collaboration and contributes to the effectiveness of the program's ability to serve the state of Missouri and surrounding areas. The EdD Program is overseen by a Director and an Associate Director, who are both full-time faculty members at the University of Missouri. The program is also overseen by a Coordinating Committee which is comprised of two representatives from each of the five partner institutions. Finally, each of the five institutions has a coordinator, responsible for the more immediate implementation of the program at their specific sites. The Associate Director is the coordinator for the University of Missouri site(s) and also serves as the main program coordinator for the EdD Program within the ELPA department.

- Instructional teams comprised of faculty from each of the five partner institutions work together each semester to ensure content themes are integrated across the coursework and that course assignments are problem-based, reflective, and aligned with the learning objectives of the program.
- Our students are employed full-time as educational leaders while working on applying the knowledge and skills from their courses in real-time in their laboratories of practice.
- The focus of our program on developing scholarly practitioners, as seen in the design of the dissertation-in-practice.

8. How long does it take to complete this degree program?

While a small handful of students have finished in the program in 3 years, the average student finishes in 4 to 5 years. The first 2 years in the program are devoted to coursework, followed by written and oral comprehensive examinations, and then the dissertation-in-practice. Variation in time to degree is most often experienced in the dissertation portion of the program.

9. For PK-12 administrators, how will this program fulfill superintendent certification requirements?

The Statewide Cooperative EdD Program is not a certification program.

10. What is the time commitment while I am in the program?

Students take 2 years of required coursework as a cohort. Each cohort begins with a day-long orientation in late April or early May of the year they are admitted. Soon after the orientation, there is pre-work which typically consists of assigned readings, individual assignments, and some introductory online coursework. This pre-work prepares the student for the intensive summer instruction that happens when all students come to Columbia, MO for 12 days (typically 3 days a week for 4 weeks in July). In addition to the time spent in class during the summer session, students are also working with their teams on projects in the evenings and/or over the weekends. The second summer follows a similar format, but instead of an orientation there is typically a site-specific meeting during the month of June. Each summer students complete 7 credit hours. During the Fall and Spring semesters, students are taking courses in-person (once a week, typically on Wednesday evenings) and online for a total of 5 credit hours each semester.

11. Can I work full-time while in this program?

The program is designed for educational leaders who work full time. Completion of the program while holding a full-time leadership position makes program learning immediately applicable in one's laboratory of practice.

12. Where will courses be offered?

The summer courses are offered in Columbia and courses during the Fall and Spring semesters are offered through each of the five partner institutions. Partner institutions often host extension sites or utilize distance technologies to make the program even more accessible to students.

13. What are the qualifications of the faculty who teach in this program?

One of the unique features of the Statewide Cooperative EdD Program is that faculty from each of the five partner institutions work together to develop and teach the courses. An instructional team leader facilitates this collaborative process each semester to ensure that the courses fit with the program's curricular expectations. All EdD faculty hold a doctorate degree, are full-time faculty, and encompass years of experience in their fields. There are currently over 100 faculty members who participate in the EdD Program either through teaching, advising, and/or service on dissertation committees.

14. What are the primary content areas in this program?

The curriculum is thematic, integrated, problem-based, and team-oriented. The EdD Program curriculum incorporates four main critical lenses essential to educational leadership: leadership theory and practice, organizational analysis, educational policy, and content and context of learning. In addition, students engage in research, inquiry, and evaluation coursework in order to further develop the tools necessary to transfer knowledge into practice.

15. How well established is the Statewide Cooperative EdD Program?

Since 1997, the University of Missouri Statewide Cooperative EdD Program in Educational Leadership has served over 700 educational leaders in Missouri (and surrounding areas). This includes 483 graduates as of Fall 2015, and 250 students who are currently active in the program.

16. Is there a final research project? What is it like?

The culminating event is the completion of an individually designed dissertation-in-practice. These rigorous dissertation studies are designed to address real world problems of practice in education, specifically within a student's own laboratory of practice. As one of 21 charter members of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, the dissertation-in-practice is just one example of our program redesign efforts. A taskforce of EdD Program faculty from around the state, with input from alumni and current students, worked for over 2 years to develop a dissertation-in-practice format that entails well-designed, applied research with substantial value for informing educational practice. The first dissertation-in-practice was successfully defended by a Cohort 8 student in the Spring of 2014 and this format is being implemented across the state for Cohort 9 students who completed their comprehensive examinations in the Fall of 2015.

17. How marketable is this degree?

At the end of coursework for Cohort 8, we asked students a variety of questions about their experiences in the program. Of those who completed the survey:

- 91% agreed that the work requirements for courses contributed to their skill-set as an educational professional (58% strongly agreeing)
- 92% agreed that because of what they learned in their courses, they perform better in their current jobs (61% strongly agreeing)

The following quote signify how a student just finishing coursework had already begun to advance professionally due to their participation in the program:

“I entered the program knowing it would help me advance professionally but I thought it would be within my department or by going back into K-12. Instead, I was able to obtain a higher profile position within a different department.”

18. How much money will I be investing in this program?

As tuition and fees change over time, you are encouraged to visit the [University of Missouri's Office of Cashiers](#). Each Fall semester we develop a cost comparison chart and you can contact the Associate Director and/or any of the site coordinators to obtain a copy. We do know that tuition for Cohort 11 will be higher than what is currently listed.

19. What are the quality standards to which this program adheres?

The Statewide Cooperative EdD Program was established with approval by the Missouri Coordinating Board of Higher Education and engages students and faculty in providing feedback on an ongoing basis. This includes going beyond course evaluations to survey students at the end of coursework, checking in with the faculty instructional teams each semester, and reaching out to graduates 1 year and 3 years after graduation. In addition, our participation in CPED provides us with opportunities to enhance our program as related to national and international programmatic benchmarks.

20. There are so many issues to consider when choosing a doctoral program. It is hard to focus on the big picture. How do I make sure I am asking the right questions?

One way to make sure you are asking the right questions is to keep from asking the wrong ones, such as “How hard will I have to work?” or “How convenient is this program?” Our advice is to consider that anything worthwhile is not easy and often not convenient. In the end, the important question is: When you look at your diploma, what do you want it to say? We believe a degree from the University of Missouri speaks for itself.